

We see our military serving honorably overseas. We see them returning home proudly in uniform. We see their names on the nightly news when they make sacrifices far beyond what we can imagine. Here in Niagara Falls, we have our own heroes, and they are based at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station (NFARS).

While the community has long recognized the value of this base, it has never been as important as it is now. As the Department of Defense begins a new round of Base Realignment and Closure talks, known collectively as BRAC, the strategic significance of the NFARS will be evaluated. Just as the strong support shown by the community in Niagara Falls saved the base in the last closure round, I am confident that it will again.

Because I know that the Station is more than a military base, I have tirelessly advocated in Congress on behalf of NFARS. It is an integral part of our local community, providing nearly 3,000 quality jobs to the residents of Niagara and Erie Counties and \$133 million to the local economy last year. I have worked with my colleagues to secure nearly \$14 million in the past two years for infrastructure improvements to the base. Some of this funding will go towards erecting a new Fire and Rescue Station on the base, which will provide its services not just to NFARS, but also to numerous related local civilian organizations. I have spearheaded these and other base-related projects, which are good for both the Station and the region.

Beyond the economic impact, the Niagara Air Station serves a mission, which is critical to the future of the U.S. armed forces. With a two-mile runway, the longest in Western New York, most Air Force aircraft can fly non-stop operations to Europe and then beyond. Because it shares its location with the Niagara Falls International Airport, the Station uses are diverse. Located near the northern border, NFARS serves as a launch point for the efforts of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in our global war on terrorism as Coast Guard and border patrol helicopters use its facilities, numerous law enforcement agencies conduct secure meetings and training on its grounds, and new environmentally-friendly aircraft de-icing techniques have been developed on the base.

As this year's BRAC discussions move forward, I will not forget the important contributions that our men and women in uniform at the Air Reserve Station have made to the security of both our local community and to the nation at-large. The continued existence of NFARS will ensure the future defense of America, and will protect the economic stability in the Niagara region. In the months ahead, I will remain as dedicated to the defense of the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station as those who work there are to the defense and success of our region, our state, and

our country.

We cannot let our heroes down.